

New-Englands
choicest Blessing

*And the Mercy most to be desired by
all that wish well to this People.*

Cleared in a
S E R M O N
Preached before the
COURT of ELECTION
At Boston on May 28.

1679.

By **JAMES ALLEN,**
Teacher to the first gathered Church therein.



BOSTON,
Printed by **John Foster,** 1679.



To the Reader.

Christian Reader,

THe general acceptance this Discourse found in the time of it, together with the earnest desire of many that it might be published for their further benefit, as also the intreaty of the honoured Court of Deputies, who invited to the preaching of it (which I acknowledge to the praise of that gracious guidance and assistance given from the Lord to the unworthy Instrument) hath occasioned the exposing it to publick view. The worth of the Author will not much commend it to any, but that of the Subject may; it being of that absolute and universal necessity, and excellency, both for the spiritual, as well as outward happiness of this whole people, so also of each particular person; as the experience of the Generation immediately foregoing abundantly testifies. You must not expect any curiosity or quaintnes, the design of it being to edifie more then to please, any further than pleasing is a means to edification, and where there is so good a frame as to be most satisfied with that by which they may be most spiritually profited. I remember what I have heard were some of the dying words of that excellent man Dr. *Viver*, that he thanked God he had been a plain Preacher, and used that way which the Lord is wont to accompany with the demonstration of his Spirit; it is by that way of preaching which the world counts foolishnes, that God will save them that believe. I doe not by this aime at my own credit, nor expect it will be promoted by it; but if I doe decrease so Christ may increase, I shall account it my glory, and the matter of my praise. If Faith and Love to God in Christ, and to his People (the spring of evangelical obedience, and the way to Gods Covenant Presence with us) may hereby be furthered, I shall thereby obtain my design. In the applicatory part, I have rather laid down rules how each should carry it in their several capacities, then reprobated any for miscarriages in them, as

To the Reader,

Judging it the best way to the end : such misdemeanors of publick Persons being more in report then proof, that never truly represents any man. Besides, *Regula est index sui et obliqui, &c wife*, if good men will use it as a glass to discover faults for the rectifying what is amiss, as well as direction to them in the right way : and where they are not so, it is a means God blesseth for that end, *Rom. 7.9.* when God so commissioneth it, as he did the commandment to Paul, ▪

My hearty desire is, the gracious presence of God may be with it, to promote thine and his Peoples happiness, by engaging your ende.vours and prayers that the Covenant Presence of God may be with you. I am

Yours to serve you in the Lord

James Allen.

1 King.



1 King. 8.57.

The Lord our God be with us, as he was with our Fathers, let him not leave us, nor forsake us.

After I had received the invitation and call to this service, I cannot express the Soul tremblings I had, (indeed sense of my own unholiness at any time to speak before such an Assembly as this, and upon such an occasion; especially in a day so circumstanced as this is,) lest you should be disappointed of that; which you so much need, the best Counsel Heaven can afford. But being satisfied your desire was the Lords Call, I was so far encouraged as to venture upon it, in expectation of divine Assistance: And now humbly beg this may be the will of this whole Assembly, all the Lords people in it, that God may be with me as he hath been with those who have formerly spoken in his Name, upon the like occasion; that through the help of your prayers, and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, that which is lacking may be supplied, and this service may turn to your Edification.

THe words read to you, are part of Solomons blessing of all Israel, who were assembled at the dedication of the Temple, and was after that solemn Prayer he had made, for Gods favour to them in the variety of Cases, and Emergencies might beset them, ver. 55. *After all this be good and blessed all the Congregation. He blesseth them.*

1. By declaring them blessed, and acknowledging that favour the Lord had shewed them, ver. 56.

2. By this holy and pathetical wish and desire, as comprehensive of all the particular mercies before prayed for, God might so be with that Generation as with the former, with the end and effect of that desire, ver. 57, 58.

3. His further desire & wish for them, that what he had particularly mentioned in his Prayer before, might be accepted of God for them, ver. 59, and performed: with his designt, and end, the advancement of Gods glory, ver. 60

4. His holy Counsel and advice to them, how they should carry it to the Lord, that they might enjoy the good desired for them, ver. 61. The Text is the second way by which he blesseth them, wishing all that good to them, that truly will make them blessed, such a presence of God with them, as is comprehensive of all that follows. We bless others when we do wish & truly desire that for them which will make them so; especially, when it is not a bare desire, but with Authority as this was, Solomon being a Prophet as well as a King, and here acting in an extraordinary way, doing that God commanded should be done by Aaron and his Sons, Numb. 6.24, to the end To which he promised the ratifying it, as being done in the way of an Ordinance, and Institution of the Lord. In the words we have Se-

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joiners with or desire for Israel.

1. The petition it self, express, 1. Affirmatively, that God may be with us; amplified and illustrated, 1. By the kind of his presence, as our God, 2. The Degree, as with our Fathers. 2. Negatively, by variety of words to the same sense, not leave us forsake us.

2. The Petitioner, that is Solomon, a wise man, their Ruler, acting as a Prophet, and in the name of all that people.

3. The Persons for whom it is, all the Congregation of Israel. I shall not spend time in giving you the various readings, or Criticisms about the words, they are well rendered to comprehend the sense of them.

1. The wish, or that is desired, 1. What is meant by the presence of God or his being with us. 2. Our Fathers. 3. As with them. 4. Not to leave nor forsake, and why that is added. There must be a little cleared to make way for the Doctrine.

1. Gods being with them. There is a twofold Presence of God, or he is said to be with any two ways,

1. By his essential Presence, by which God is always with the creatures, wherever they are, or whatever their state is, Psal. 139. 7, 8. So fills heaven and earth, Gen. 23. 24. Comprehends all things, places, contained of none, none can hide from the knowledge, nor fly from the power of it.

2. His providential or voluntary Presence, that is either common or special,

1. Common, and that ordinary, or more extraordinary : Ordinary, Gen. 17. 18. Extraordinary, when the Lord raiseth and enables any that know him not, to doe some notable thing in the world for the service of the Church, Isa. 45. 1, 2, 3, 4. so sometimes as afflictive to his people as Nebuchadnezzar. 2. Special, and that is either, 1. A gracious Presence, 2. Glorious, that with Saints and Angels in heaven ; that is the complement of their happiness, Psal. 16. ult. Its Gods gracious presence here means with his people on earth as their Covenant God, that we may call his new-Covenant Presence, Let our God be with us. This gracious Presence imports two things, 1. Conferring all good, his vigilance and efficacious provideuse for their good. 2. Delivering and defending from all evill, both these are Covenant mercies, Gen. 15. 1, by which he encourages Abraham, tells him what he might expect from his being in Covenant with him, to be his shield and exceeding great reward. And the signs of Gods Presence with Israel were the Pillar of fire, and Cloud, the one for day, the other for night, which was to guide them in the way, and defend them from, and stand between them and danger, Exod. 14. 19, 20. In allusion to this, the Psalmist 73. 2, 4. comforts himself in having the Covenant presence of God with him, He shall guide me by his Counsel, and afterwards bring me to his glory. Ps. 84. 11. he is said to be a Sun and a shield, which first is expounded to be his free communication of all good, not withholding it, i.e. powerfully conveying it. And all know what the benefit of a shield is, that intimates his with-holding all evill. This is promised to the reforming Jews and converted Gentiles who were brought into Covenant with God, Isa. 4. 5, 6.

2. By Fathers are meant godly Rulers and Teachers of the People of God, who are often so called in Scripture, as well as natural Parents, those in the generation before them, or long before, with whom God was most eminently present, Isal. 44. 1, 2, 3. Of those of old, but especially here is intended those in the former

Former Generations, for though the Lord was eminently with his people of old, in Moses and Joshua's time, and the Judges God raised up extraordinarily to be their Saviours, yet in no Age was there a more gracious presence of God than in the Age before Solomon.

3. *As with our Fathers*, that is, see Isa. 63.12,11. Ps. 44.3,4. the presence, the Church desires, that had been with their Fathers, or such a presence, 1. In wonder-working, and as gloriously as for them as in the success David had over all the Enemies of Israel, 1 Chron. 11.9. 2 Sam. 8.6,14,15. 2. That presence, or be so with us as with our holy Ancestors, by his gracious communications of himself to us in the ways of his Ordinances, Psal. 63.2, filling us with his glory, even in those signs of his presence as in those best times, ver. 5,6. as David found it when he fetched the Ark to his place, 2 Sam. 6.12,13,14,15. as to their Communion with, so right knowledge of the things of God's house, and that converting Presence of God there, Isa. 54.13. made David say, Psal. 84.11. one day there was worth a thousand elsewhere. As also in civil order, Ezek. 48.35. was said of them, so might be of us, this may be the Name, *Febius Shammah*, the name of our Courts and Churches, be with us as with them in these respects.

3. In-dwelling presence, such a presence of God in our hearts as was then in theirs, filling us with his Spirit, strengthening unto duty, 2 Cor. 6.18. As God promises those that separate from the world, 1 Cor. 15.10. Paul he acknowledging he had it whence he did so much work, & in such a manner, Act 14.1. they so spake, many did believe, whence was it that those before us were so powerful, & persuasive, not by excelling in common gifts above many that come after, but having a fuller presence of God, there was a more full pouring forth of the Spirit, Zec. 12.9. that which will make the feeble as David, & David as an Angel of God.

It may be enquired why it is said, *as with our Fathers?* it seems to be a limitation of it, when as one generation may need more than another, and usually in some respects, a succeeding generation to any special reforming generation, doth: And therefore Elijah, 2 King. 2.9. he asks a double portion of the Spirit of Elijah, not only to what the other Prophets had, but what Elijah himself had, as being to meet with harder work, a more sinful and unreformed People.

Ans. 1. Imports that kind of presence they had sometimes, the similitude and not the degree, 1 Pet. 1.14.

2. It doth not always limit the measure; a great degree of God's gracious presence is here meant, but not just so much is intended, so much as, and as much more, as the Lord saw good; so much as might carry them as well through their duty, and work, in their generation, as those in theirs.

3. The People of God are wont to gather upon God, by his grants, that is vast ground to Faith, and Prayer, Exod. 33.13,14,15,17,18. upon every grant Moses gets in with the Lord, and asks yet greater; so it should be here, we shall be in better frame to ask more, when we have obtained so much, and in better hope to prevail.

4. *Let him not leave us nor forsake us;* These are only amplifications, and shew the weight of what he did desire, by abiding on it, not leave to others, nor to ourselves, not quit the care of his People, Jer. 14.9. that he deprecates on the behalf of the Church, not take away signs of his presence, nor his own presence from them. Solomon his commendable practice is for our imitation. Hence the Doctrine from the words is,

Ques. *The obtaining and continuall of God's eminently gracious & overruling presence with his People ought to be sincerely & anxiety desired by those that truly wish their happiness and prosperity.* 1. That it should be. 2. Why it should be.

Ans. 1. Because it is the best blessing and favour can be desired for them.

1. It ought to be so, it is that they have done, which had the greatest love to Israel, as Moses, Exod. 33.15. Let thy presence go with us, or carry us not hence. So David desired for Solomon, and the People under him, I Chron. 22.11,18. So Solomon here when he blesseth Israel, and it was the usual Salutation among the Jews, Ruth. 2.4.

2. It is the most necessary blessing, nothing else is absolutely necessary but the presence of God, we may be happy without Creatures, the Israelites found Clothes, houses, food, was not necessary, not the ordinary way of fits supply, God could supply it another way ; but this cannot, Luk. 10.42. there is one thing necessary, that is, the gracious presence of God, therefore Moses chuseth the Wilderness with Gods presence, rather than Canaan without him, Exod. 33.15. Heaven is not desirable without it, Psal. 73.25.

2. It is the most suitable blessing to the People of God, nothing more pleasing as well as profitable to them, Psal. 4.6. therefore the best blessing.

3. It is a sufficient good, you cannot desire a more comprehensive blessing, this is enough, Gen. 33.11. Jacob when he had obtained it by earnest prayer, he acknowledgeth he had all; nothing less will make a people happy, more is superfluous. It is a saving, and it is a satisfying presence, Jer. 14.8. all good is in it, it is sufficient for defence against danger, Rom. 8.31. Psal. 27.2.23.4. To support afflit, and succeed, in every duty, Hag. 1.14. Mach. 28.20. Gen. 39.2. so that promise intimates thus much, as was made to Joshua, and applyed to the use of every Believer, Heb. 13.5. against fears of Enemies, or of want, you cannot want providing for, that have God graciously with you, Psal. 144.15.

4. The most distinguishing favour, Exod. 33.16. our experience proves it.

Ans. 2. The want of it is the greatest evil, so God threatneth it, Hos. 9.12. and the Prophet in the Name of the Lords people, Jer. 14.9. deprecates it, as the worst that can befall them: though Sword & Famine were threatened, he takes no notice of them, but endeavours to prevent a greater ; Lord do not thou leave us nor forsake us, be not thou a stranger, Deut. 28.15. at this gap all other evils enter, if God forsakes, Ordinances will leave you, any benefit by them, friends will forsake, all comforts, he carries all with him, they are but his Attendants, Creatures and other enjoyments are but ~~as~~ Del, especially, when all your outward good came with Gods presence, It will leave you if God doth ; it is the presence of God, hath multiplied you, enriched you, outwardly sanctified any of you, if he forsakes, these will not stay, no nor the People of God neither, then Enemies will come, & all misery, such shall say, are not all these things come upon us, because God is not among us, & Enemies will know our shadow is removed, Num. 14.14. It was that kept of Energies from Israel, they heard the Lord was among them, that encouraged the Psalmist Enemies, Psal. 71.11. God hath forsaken, hence while God is with his People, no evil will affoil them, therefore as you would see the prosperity, and prevent the misery of the people of God, desire the gracious presence of God for them.

USE. 1. For Information, See hence who are the best friends of a professing People: Who are thine O New-England that love you best, though they have not at

-least they are not so accounted of by you : Those they are who wish, endeavour that the gracious presence of God may continue with you, and be with you as signally as with any of his People in former times, or in the first times of this People. A praying, zealous, reformed and reforming Magistracy, Ministry and People, *Jas. 5.2,7,8.* that upon your walls give God no rest, that promote & keep up the seperation between the precious and the vile, *Jer. 15.19. Ezek. 22.26,27,28.* These are your gap-men who prevent Gods going away, and ruine coming ; but doe you not think them the troublers of Israel ? Are you not wary of them, and fain would be rid of them ? The old and faithfull ones, that have seen the works of the Lord, doe you not with others were in their room, that you might have more elboe room ? Doe you not dig pits for their soul, that pray for yours, for a converting presence of God, that you might be with him as your fathers were ? *Jer. 18.20.* Thy best dayes are gone O New-England, if their Prayers should be turned against you. O Sirs, yet you may revive the hopes of such, if you would prize and value them, the presence of God might be desired and obtained by them.

2. Then those that desire Gods departure from a People are their worst enemies : Such as would drive away or remove his gracious presence from you, *Job. 21.14,15.* There are such men as would fain be rid of the presence of God, some such bold sinners, they say it with their mouthes, would have no Sabbath, nor preaching nor precise walking, would be rid of godly Magistrates, Ministers, Christians, they have too much of them : all wicked men say it in their hearts, others in their practices, and wicked works, especially sensual Sinners, and that have fullness of the world, have all their carnal hearts doe with, they love not the presence of God, its not the way to sinfull pleasure or profit or credit in the world, *Mal. 3.14. Jas. 30,10,11,12.* will not endure plain distinguishing, seperating preaching, but must be footed, pleased in a sinfull way ; so would have the holy one to cease from among them, the sanctifying presence of God, that they cannot bear : and what follows ? These are the worst enemies among the people that would take away your God, *Judg. 13.24.* he thought so of them that took away his dung-hill gods, and those means of worship of his own inventing, how much more reason have you to look upon them that would take away your glory, the signs of Gods gracious presence, even his own holy institutions.

3. Hence see how to make a right judgement of the happiness or misery of any people, it is according to the presence of God among them, his gracious presence, *Ezad. 33.19.* It is that makes the most noted difference between one people and another, the same people in one time and in another, according to the manifestation of his presence, *Pal. 144.15.* May it not in this respect be truly said, former dayes were better than these, when they had more of Gods presence then now : but the Wise man reproves the saying so, that former dayes were better. *Eccle. 7.10.*

Answe. The meaning is not, that some dayes of the Church and people of God are not more troublesome, and others more prosperous, and that we should not bewail with godly sorrow the evil of the dayes we live in, and the sins & judgments that make them so; you must see they are so, and enquire into the cause, but the meaning is,

1. That which is blamed is, so to complain of the evill of present time, as not to take notice of the good in it that the Lord continues, that is folly, when the

Lord hath removed many choice and precious ones from the Bench and the Pulpits, yet we ought to take notice with thankfulness, of the precious ones there, whom he hath left, and so much of his presence with them. This was their sin, *Num. 14.45. Exod. 16.3.*

2. Nor should we complain that our Lot is cast in such a day, that is to murmur at the providence of God, and the holy government of it, who hath appointed the places and times of every person, *Ab. 17.26.*

3. To infest upon a wrong cause, and charge the positive and meritorious evil upon the times; but this is wile enquiry and judgement, when we see our own and others sins to be the cause of evil times, and that evil men make evil days, *2 Tim. 3.1,2,3.* they are the deserving or meritorious cause.

4. To judge the want of outward things, or presence of outward evils to be the cause deficient or privative of worse times, that mens trade and estates grow worse; when the true cause or want is the gracious presence of God which is hindred by our sin, *Is. 49.1,2.* That there should be no spiritual thriving, and trade with heaven should be on the losing hand. So to see times where less of God is, to be worse, is wisdom to enquire the cause that it may be mended, and we may obtain the presence of God with us as in former times.

U S E 2. Of Endeavours. To this great Assembly, That you would sincerely desire the presence of God with this People, *as with their Fathers.* I am encouraged to press this upon you, being well perswaded, I speak to a great many, that love the prosperity of Jerusalem, and that come to be directed in the way to it.

1. Endeavour it. 2. Earnestly pray for it. I will give you but these two general directions.

1. To endeavour it, do what you can, and lies with you it may be so, true do-fires are always followed with suitable endeavours, for they are the risings and goings out of the will, to the good it hath chosen; there are two main acts of the will, viz. elicit and imperate, and having chosen it, pursues it by Commanding every faculty of the Soul, yea, and members of the body. The understanding that it should inform it self, what is the best way, and then affections to love or hate, as this good is furthered or hindred, or we in the obtaining of it. Direction for your endeavour better cannot be given than what is in 2 Chron. 14.2. being from the immediate guidance & inspiration of the Spirit of God, *1 Cor. 28.9.* The visible gracious presence of God is conditional with a visible People, see that you fulfil it, performing your Covenant duty to God in your severall Relations you stand in to him and his People: It is not enough you are not against him in such a day, neutrality will be counted opposition, *Matt. 12.30..*

Men, Brethren, and Fathers,

1. Endeavour, (I speak to this whole Assembly together) to keep and recover Gods presence by deep humiliation for, and through Reformation of what is provoking to the Lord, search-out the *Aches* and judge it, *Josb. 7.12.* otherwise the Lord will not be among you, sin and the holy God cannot be together in the same heart, nor place, were it is allowed, *Am. 3.2. if two walk together they must be agreed,* bewaile and reform Sensuality, want of first love, lukewarmness in Religion, Animosities, unbelief, you have been frequently minded of these sins you all know to be so, find and clear each of you your personal guilt in any of them. This

In Covenant duty with promise of Covenant mercy, *Exo.* 26. 41.

2. Let God have his will, do not cross him, but labour to please him, remember he is your Sovereign, he will be with you as such an one, therefore you must be with him as his Subjects : subject to all his Commands, and submit to his Providence, that is the way to his favour, *1 King.* 8. 58. it is the effect of, and way to his gracious presence, to walk as according to his positive, so his instituted will, *Lev.* 26. 1, 2, 3, to ver. 13, then you walk with God when you obey his will, and he will be with you by fulfilling his promises to you, *Matt.* 28. 19, 20. *Job.* 14. 23. *Gen.* 8. 29. and when you submit, to his Providence, *Deut.* 3. 17, 24.

3. Give him good content, value and highly prize his presence, the Lord is not wont to leave any till undervalued by them, *Psal.* 81. 12. when they took not full content in him, then he gave them up, *Heb.* 5. 14. therefore see you get and keep up love to his presence, so to the signs of it in his Ordinances, *Psal.* 52. 7, 8. value Ministry, and the faithful Ministers, esteem them as choice Covenant blessings, *Gen.* 3. 14. And godly Rulers, when those that love you rule over you, *1 King.* 10. 1, 9. be not weary of them, and Sabbaths, but call them your delights, *Isai.* 58. 8, 9, 10. maintain an humble sense of your unworthiness of it, and yet a need of it, *Psal.* 17. 15. be thankful for the least discoveries of it, and yet earnestly desirous of the most, especially value God's Son, *Psal.* 2. 12.

A Word to the Freemen.

To all concerned in the work of this day, if you are with God in your chusing, and they are so who are chosen by you as our Fathers were, we may expect the Lord will be so with his people: our fears or hopes will be furthered as this day is managed. It is promised as an high Testimony of Gods favour to his People, *Psal.* 1. 26. when he gives them Judges as at the first, &c. and how doth he give them but in that way of giving you hearts to chuse such, for it is a fruit of the right managing that other Covenant privilege, the Lord hath betrusted you with, *Gen.* 30. 20. to have our Governors from among our selves,

1. Be not negligent in your choice, this liberty is a Talent, you have this day another opportunity to use it, do not hide it in a napkin, or in the Earth, as that unfaithful Servant, *Matt.* 25. 24, 25. that your worldly busines may not take up that time should be employed in this Service. I have heard it much complained of, that Freemens meetings are not attended, nor half of them appear upon choice of Deputies in this Town, and other concerns in that nature: and many that do come, have never prayed for guidance, nor made enquiries of things, or persons; but only do as they are led. Is not this to do the work of the Lord negligently? To be careless of your Oath? And to be accessory to all the mischief you might have prevented, if it be any otherwise then well, and to have no part nor share in what good the Lord this way brings about to his People?

2. Those who are active, see that it be for God, the glory of God, and the good of his People: be on Gods side, let not private respects sway you in your Elections, to be for those that are your friends or favourers, be for God, and he will be with you. If you would be so, then let your choice be guided and overruled by the word of God, see how men stand affected to Religion, and the common good of this people, *2 Sam.* 23. 3. He must be just, ruling in the fear of God. If they had the wisdom of Solomon, Justice of Thrasias, &c, they would not be fit for this People,

People, if they are not pious. *Solomon saith, wisdom with an inheritaunce is good,* that is most true here, or it is good, I meane that he be an heir of glory, be truly gracious, other qualifications must not be severed from, but seasoned with the fear of God. It is true, every godly man is not fit to be a Ruler, and as true, no ungodly man is. They that are not true to God, can never be so to the main Interest of this his People: All other qualifications without this will make them but the more dangerous Enemies to the People of God. Be sure then you chuse friends of God, if by them you would expect a manifestation of his friendship to you; It is true, the best are subject to infirmities, that may be personal disadvantages, but they will be faithful to the interest of godliness.

3. When you have chosen them, know that you are with God in a right and regular carriage to them, and in the way to have him with you and us.

1. If it be a good choice of holy men, blesse God for it, and take it as a pledge and token of his favour to you, and his presence with you, *Psal. 1.26. Ezecl. 34.26.* If otherwise, there is no Reason to complain of any, but your selves, therefore you should humble your selves before God as deserving such a Judgement; and for your sinfulness in chusing it.

2. Follow them with your prayers, God may be with them, as he hath been with those before them, if you would pray more for them, and complain less of them you would be better People, and would find them more a blessing to you. If their missing it further your prayers, that is the best way to rectifie their proceedings, *1 Tim. 2.1,2.* whence you were solemnly exhorted to it the last year, by a faithful Servant of Christ

3. obey them; though this or that form of Government is mans creature, yet Magistracy is the Lords Ordinance, and their authority in those places is from God: therefore *Rom. 13.1,2.* Christians were bound for conscience sake to obey evill ones, when got into place, much more when good, *1 Tim. 6.1.* and a further obligation you have then other people, to ready obedience, they are of your own choice.

Remember when you chuse them, they are men: you chuse not Angels, but men of like infirmity with other good men in this world, therefore expect not too much, but you ought to think that all will not be done that ought to be: But suffice know when you have chosen them, they are gods by office, *Psal. 82.6.* and in the exercise of that to be obeyed, though only in the Lord.

2. A word to those that are, and may be our Rulers, Honoured in the Lord, much may be done by you to obtain and maintain the presence of God with this People: One faithfull man on the Bench, may stop the gap, and prevent Gods going out at it, or enemies coming in, *Ezecl. 22. 30. Psal. 106.32.* I would humbly command to you that which is your main duty, in which you ought to walk with God in that Nation, and do your part, God may be with you, and so with this People. It is direction given by divine Oracle, God the Father and the Son by the Spirit spake it, *2 Sam. 23.3.* A Scripture hath been improved profitably among you upon this occasion, by a worthy Servant of God now with the Lord, as a direction in the choice of such that may be a blessing to a People, and to them chosen how to carry it, that the People over whom they are may have the gracious presence of God among them, and continued with them, not only a promise they should have such a Ruler, but a precept what they shold be, that are Rulers of Israel. More particularly,

1. The care of the People of God and the things of God is in a great measure committed to you, as you engage your Authority for the protection and defence of these, so you are with the Lord, and he will be with you and his People by your means.

1. For the People of God, these are dear to God, and as the Apple of his Eye, Zech.2.8. as he is sensible of the least wrong done to them, so of every kindness and favour shewed to them, you are as the visible covers to these Eyes, their outward defence under God lies upon you; as it is a special favour to Gods people to have such as fear the Lord over them, so is it an high honour to be over such a People, and the Lord further manifestis his kindness to Rulers, when they are spirited and raised up to be Saviours upon Mount Zion; it is both a manifestation of it, and a sign of more, Zech.12.5,6,8. when God will make *Jerusalem* a burthenome stone to all that heave at them, then shall their Rulers be encouraged to stand by them, as being strong in having a people in Covenant with God to stand for, so the God of that Covenant. To these the Lord promiseth great success, as fire is to the wood laid upon it in the Hearth, &c. so shall they be to their Enemies, they shall prevail against them. Let Gods out-calls dwell with you, and your Countenance and Favour be extended to all, that truly fear the Lord, though in some Circumstances they may not be of your mind, when they carry it without just offence.

2. Care of the things of God, his worship, that is also incumbent on you as Rulers, defences of, and encouragement in the practice of godliness, and matters of worship. I am far from thinking, Magistrates in New-Testament times, have nothing to do with, either the restraining or encouraging outward acts of men referring to the first Table: The commended Examples in Old-Testament times, that were moral actions are for our Instruction, as well as moral precepts (where those actions were not extraordinary,) As those about the worship of God and religious observation of the Sabbath, that then were under divine Institution as to that time, and mode of Service: There is the same obligation to the care of the Lords day now, and Institutions of Christ in the New-Testament.

But to wave the dispute of it, what is the duty, is the greatest difficulty, and made the darker, by the various apprehensions of worthy and excellent men. I shall not undertake decision of that Case, but shall endeavour to hold forth so much light for your direction in it, you may be with God, & act in Integrity and Evangelical Perfection: And know you that the Lord will not withdraw because of Infirmities, and weaknesses, where there are not wilful miscarriages of his Servants.

1. Defend them that are the most pretious things of this people, & then liberty to enjoy the Ordinances of God in their purity, you must use your Authority for their defence, not only from open, but secret Enemies; And what ever tends to the ruine and overthrow of the Churches here establisht. And as was well hinted by a worthy person in his Election Sermon, less will undoe us here, (this is but a little Boat) then in greater Kingdomes. I do not think errors of the mind can be compelled, but by light and Reason, or that any can be forced to be of another mind; they must be drawn, not driven, that heartily close with Christ, and embrace Religion.

But if any under pretence of Religion will endeavour the subversion of that is true, and so esteemed by those in Authority, such endeavours ought to be prevented by them, and powerfully obviated.

I am perswaded, that all the people of God are agreed in the end, that injury, at least ruine should be hindred Authoritatively, the greatest doubt is about the means, what is the best way to overthrow the designs of those that are Enemies, and fundamentally so to the welfare of this People, and it is high wisdome, the choise of the fittest means to the end; it is very hard to say what that is, they can best judge of it that hear all the Circumstances of a Case. That I would humbly commend is, when you cannot all agree upon the way, use conciendency to each other, that you may agree, *vis uita fortior*. That which is done with greatest Concurrence you may expect most of Gods prefence with; and will be most effectual, though in it self it may seem most contemptible.

2. Let them have your countenance and encouragement, that is by your Example and Authority maintain and uphold the true worship of God, 2 *Cives* 17. 6.7.8. Jehohphat was commended for his care that all places might have a faithful teaching Minister, see ver.9. how the Lord was with them, *Neb.* 13.11. Nehemiah he took care that the house of God it might not be forsaken by withdrawing necessary supports for those that attend the service of God, oyle there must be to maintain the Lighes. They are duties of necessity, not liberty of Justice, not Charity, so fall under your Cognizance.

2. The matters of men are also your care, and therein you are with God when there is due execution of Justice, if it be speedy. Impartial as our Fathers were, such have been in these places that could not by friendship, or flattery, or bribery be turned out of the way of right Judgement, but have judged for the Lord, *Jer.* 22.15.19. as Jefah was commended for it, and it was well with him and his People, ver.34. *Jer.* 5.1. and *Righteousness exalteth a Nation*, *Prov.* 14.34. the contrary evil is its Reproach, Justice saith the Philosopher, is all virtue.

A word to the *Reverend Elders*, much may be done by you, *Fathers and Brethren*, that the gracious prefence of God may be continued with this People. If we be so with God as those that went before us, he will be with us, as he was with them. One *Sebujah*, of how much use was his Faithfulness to God in the matters of his worship, 2 *King.* 12.2:

1. Endeavour the like agreement and union, in promoting the Truths of the gospel. It was promised to gospel times, *Isai.* 12.7.8. That those who brought the glad Tydings of the gospel, should lift up their voice together, and sing together, this the Apostle, *Rom.* 10.15. applies to the Ministers of the Gospel, and I believe it had as eminent a fulfilling in those faithful and pretious Elders, that were first planters of the Churches here, as ever since the primitive times, in exalting together the reign and government of Christ in his Church; and though in some Circumstances they differed, (for in those things is the greatest difference among the godly) yet they agreed in the substance, and manifested it in that Platform of Discipline, which was published as the Judgement of the Ministers of *New-England*, asserting the Authoritative Rule of the Elders with the liberty of the Brethren. Though the Judgement of the best, should not be looked upon as Scripture Canons, nor bind any further, then it is found agreeing with the Word of God, by which it ought to be tryed; yet I think I may safely say, that is a clearer Judgement of the mind of God in the Scripture, in that matter, then can be expected in this next generation: I should rather suspect my own Judgement in the Scriptures, then theirs about that Case.

1. Considering how singularly they were qualified for that discovery, *Exet.* 43. 11.

11. though it is true, in improvements of natural light, that may be encreased by Industry, and those that stand upon others shoulders, may see further then they did upon whose shoulders they stand; but it is not so in spiritual things, the further knowledge of which depends upon Revelation, *Eph. 1.17.* and the humble the Lord teacheth, *Ps. 25.9. Rev. 4.1,2,3.* In that glorious discovery is Gods glorious inthroning himself in the midl of his Church, affording gracious supplies and protection to them, is manifested to John when prepared by an heavenly Ecstasie, which was the Theater in which he did behold it. When we find a Company of men more holy, humble, and diligent, then those were, something more may be exp. ded:

2. They were free from outward Temptations to please men, having a people ready to receive what should be made known to them, upon their serious searching out the mind of God in his word: besides the Conflicts and agitations from abroad, to put them upon their fuller examination of it by the word of God; and to weigh it in the ballance of the Sanctuary.

3. We shall not find in Scripture, or other Histories of the Church, that the next Age after any considerable progres in Reformation, did go beyond the first, but the contrary, *Judg. 2.10.* there have been gradual declinings till that light hath almost been extinguished; then the Lord hath raised a new spirit of Reformation, to whom he hath given & revealed more of his will, & further knowledge of his truth: Nay we may read of some of the Lords faithfull servants, that their first wayes have been the best, *2. Chron. 17.3.* So with Solomon; & our Lord Jesu blames the Ephesian Church for forsaking their first love, and where love decayes light doth not increase in practical Truths, *Rev. 2.5.* This was *New-Englands* glory and desighn, they came not hither to assert the propheticall or Preffly office of Christ so much, that were so fully owned in *Old England*, but his kingly, to bear witness to those truths concerning his visible Kingdome, the maintaining of these lies much with you. I am perfwaded, that the truth concerning the Kingdome of Christ, is that word of Christs patience, that the Phyladelphian Church is commended for *Rev. 3.10.* and bath that gracious presence of Christ promised to it, that they shall be kept from the hour of temptation coming upon the whole world.

1. It is that Christ suffered for, *John. 18.37.* This cause was written upon his Crofs, *Chap. 19.19.*

2. His Kingdome is as yet a Kingdome of Patience, therefore the word concerning it must be a word of patience, *Rev. 1.9.* and they that own it, their Patience will be exercised.

3. The greatest opposition sinners make, yea such as are professed Christians, is to the invisible and visible Rule of Christ, *Ps. 2.2. Luk. 19.14.*

4. It is the last truth to be suffered for, which Suffering ushers in the Kingdome of his Power, *Rev. 11.11,12,15.*

2 Endeavour to save this People, pray and preach for their Conversion, not so much to please as profit them; let it be seperating Preaching, *Jer. 15.19. Rom. 9.1, 2,3. Chap. 10.1.*

3. Be faithfull to Christ in teaching all, and only what Christ hath command-ed, *Matth. 28.18,20.* that is, all that is necessary for their salvation and edification, *All. 20. 27.*

4. Be examples to the Flock. 1 *Pet. 5.3.* of Meeknes, Humility, Self-denial and

and Sobriety. A more exemplary Ministry the world hath not had then New-England, and the Lord was with them, let us not come behind them : Men are taught more and readier to learn by example then precept : while you are thus with God, He will not leave nor forsake this people.

4. Let me leave a few words of advice with this honour'd Court, who have called me to this Service : Honour'd Sirs, you have given me the opportunity thus to speak to you, yet my message is from above, I speak to you now under the influence of a greater authority then yours, or any under heaven. Let me humbly beseech and advise you, as those I believe seek the welfare of this people, to doe your part that the gracious presence of the Lord may be with us as in former times.

1. Be courageous for God and his People, our lives and liberties, civil and sacred, are put into your trust, you may save or destroy us under God ; quit you like Christians, and as former Courts ; difficulties may be before you, but study more what becomes you at this time, then what will become of you : Enquire what is your duty, and God would have you to do, be solicitous more to please God then men, nay, assure your selves men you cannot please, the Lord you may, *Prov. 6.7.* and though hard and hazardous work is before you, if the Lord set you upon it, he will not leave you in it; *Hag. 2.4.* This is the way to have God engage with you, when you trust all with him ; make the word of God the Rule of your proceedings, and remember Issues and Events are the Lords, they are uncertain to us ; but if you be sincere for the glory of God, and in the doing your duty, though in some things you may miss it, God will own you in it, *2 Cor. 3.16.17.* And the Issue will certainly be good to you and us,

2. Be unanimous, let your Consultations and results be so as much as may be, the bundle of Arrows is not so easily broken as one, *2 Cor. 13.11.* what we faith of Church society is true of any of the Assemblies of the People of God, *be at peace and the God of peace will be with you,* and if with you, so far he is with us ; union is your strength, your dividing is like an Armies breaking rank when an Enemy is assaulting them. Those that seek the ruine of the whole, first endeavour it by dividing you, shall Herod and Pilate agree against Christ, and shall not Christians for him, and that at a time when there is so general a Conspiracy and concert among the Enemies of the Truth, against all the Professors of it? Believe not reports of each other, take not up prejudices, if you have prejudged their persons, you will make no right Judgement of what they say, pres' not things wherein there may be different apprehensions, too hard, nor heighten it by giving the difference too ill a Name, or too good, too odious, or glorious ; if there be lesser Animosities, and personal, lay them aside, they may not hinder union for publick good, two brave Romans did so. The Agreement of this Court would have an healing influence upon all other Societies under you, your practice of it would speak more then all other defires of it, and do more then all other endeavours,

3. Your being with God, will much appear in the Laws you make, to be the Rules of others walking under you, see that none of them be repugnant to the Laws of heaven, or unsuitable to the state of this People; if any be so, better shew your authority in nulling them, then neglect or contempt of them shoud lessen your authority : What are good, see to it they may be executed : as much of the wisdom of a people is seen in their making laws, so is their authority in the due execution of them, & their holiness *Deu. 5.8.* if you do not make the Laws speak

speak by executing of them, what men falsly charge on God, may be too truely on men, *Psal. 50. 21.* are like them either in weaknes, or wickednes, you either dare not shew your dislike, or have it not.

4. Safer not Plantations to be without a godly and faithful Minister, not to set down without Gods Ordinances, which are signs of Gods presence, *Exod. 20.24.* and means also by which, and in which he is among a People, *2 Cor. 15.34.* without the true God, when without teaching Priests, and no way of visible worship. Where perfons are not fit to judge for themselves who are fit to administer the holy things of God, provide some way that Heterodox and ungodly ones may not be encouraged; Tares will sooner grow then wheat.

5. Acqaint your selv. with the History of the glorious works of God, for this people in former times, those manifeſtations of Gods presence with our Fathers, & further the knowledge of it among this people: you have been often minded of it, & though ſomething hath been done towards it, by Reverend & worthy persons, yet thofe providences and experiences of feaſonable and wonderful ſupplyes, & protections, that have been moft remarkable, I have not yet ſeen. The full ſtory of this people to this day would be one of the belt of humane Histories, for the time of it, in the world, many things yet may be had from thofe that have ſeen thofe wonderful works, and Fathers should tell it to their Children, *Pſal. 44.1,2,* 3. you are our publick Fathers, tell it then to your Children, the knowledge of this by Solomon was the ground of his wiſh for the like, It was uſual with the Peo-ple of God in former times that had not the way you have to communicate remarkable Providences to after Ages, to do it by erecting Monuments, or putting a name upon the place, *Gen. 22.14.* ſo to preferve the memory of famous Providen-ces, *Exod. 17.14.15.* ſo Moſes by divine direc-tion kept a Record of that victory over Amalek, *Pſal. 70.* &c. many Pſalms there are to call to remembrance, thence it was Betheb had its Name, *Gen. 28.19.* ſo that Well, *Gen. 16.14. Josb. 4.3,4.* God himſelf gives himſelf a new Title upon it, *Gen. 22.12.* and it is a means of Gods presence and blessing, *Pſal. 78.3,4.* that they may ſet their hope in God.

2. As you ſhould endeavour each in his place, we may have this preſence of God, to pray for it earnestly, Importunately, stirring up your ſelves to take hold of God, you may not let him goe; be not willing to let go your hold on him; Argue the Caſe with humble and holy boldnes as Moſes, *Exod. 33.15. Numb. 14.13, 14. Fer. 14.9.* ſay as the, *Ruth 1.16.* as *Jacob, Gen. 32.26.* reſolve to take no denial, Magistrates ſhould pray he may be with this people, and the People he may be with them, with our Courts, our Ministers, in our Churches, with thofe that chafe, &c. *1 King. 8.58.* To stir up your endeavour and deſire.

Mot. 1. Conſider, never did you need it more then now, you have more Enemies, and thoſe more potent, you have fewer friends, and thoſe leſs power-ful, your work is greater, diſculties more formidable, ſuch Mountains as cannot be removed by humane might or power, but alone by the Spirit of the Lord, *Zec. 4. 7.* And divine help, *Matth. 8.26.* What will not men doe when the Ship is ready to ſink, and thoſe in it to perifh? O therefore awaken Christ with your Cry!

2. Conſider how much of that gracious Preſence of God ſeems to be with-drawn from us, that our Fathers enjoyed, may we not humbly expouſtulate the caſe with our ſelves, as the Church with God, *Iſa. 63. 13, 14, 15. Where is he?* where is that wonder-working Providence, whereby he did deftroy the enemies

of his people, and lead his People through the greatest fireights? that guiding, assisting, succeeding and defending presence of God? that heart humbling, converting, sanctifying Presence in Ordinances, when he knock'd at the door of your hearts in the Ministry of his word, and making way for his own entertainment? Is he so nigh to us in all we call upon him for? *Deut. 4.7.* When before *she cried be answered them, and heard them while they were speaking to him. I/sa 65.24.* - When there were such overflowing of Compassons, that he ran to meet his people, he might fall on their necks and kiss them. Were there not such happy daies in New-England, and is it so now? O then follow him, let him not goe far away, stop him at the Towns end.

3. Consider, how unwilling the Lord is to leave and forsake a People he hath so owned to be his, and done so much for. How many Stayes hath he made among us, by stilling the tumult of the Heathen, removing Sicknes? Doth he not say as *Hos 5.15.* O New-England are you willing to have me still? then seek him early. *Hos 5.15.* His preventing evils from abroad, removing the worst of your enemies; *1 Sam. 12.22.* The argument Samuel useth to further their endeavour to keep him with them, and recover his presence among them, the glory of his free mercy and goodnes engageth him with you, *Psal. 132.11.* *He hath chosen this for his habitation.* He is your God: The argument in my Text, plead it, and improve it, and remember it is in a Covenant of Grace he is yours: he takes not ad-vantage of smaller offences, they break not this Relation; if greater ones, yet he admits of Repentance. If he seems as if he would be gone, it is but to try your love, and draw out your importunity, see *Gen. 32.26.* *Exod. 32.10.* *Luk. 24.28.* *Gen. 32.9.* Nay this will be a signe the Lord will be with us, if we are unwilling he shoule leave us.

4. Consider the advantage of having Gods gracious Presence to this present, and future Generations; if I had the tongue and knowledge of an Angel, I could not tell you the half to be gotten by this way: This will be light to you in your darknes, deliverance in dangers, strength in weaknes, *Psal. 27.1.* Supplies in all your wants, *Psal. 23.1.* and *46.1.* &c. A present, a powerfull help, success in all affairs, *Gen. 39.2.* it is a full and a sufficient blessing, this will be your Glory, and a defence upon it, *I/sa 4.4.5.* This will beal all our breaches, recover all our losses, restore such a Magistracy to you as at the first, *I/sa 1.26,* and such a people to them: Ordinances will be powerfull for Conversion and Reformation. *1 Kin. 8.58.* hearts shall be inclined: may your Children shall be taught of God, and great shall be their peace, *I/sa 4.4.13.* The name of this City shall be *Zeborab Shammah, Ezek. 48.10s. Psal. 67.6.7.* Then shall the earth yield her increase, and God, even our own God, shall bless us. When you shall lay your heads in the dust, you will have the best Legacy to leave with your Children, that which good old Jacob did with Joseph, *Gen. 48.21.* *I dye, but God shall be with you:* the succeeding Generation will bless God for you, & call you Blest, & may then be encouraged to the same desire and endeavour for their Generation, that God may be with them as he was with their Fathers, he would not leave nor forsake them; their hearts may be inclined to walk in all the wayes of the Lord for ever.

SOLI DEO GLORIA.

Exodus. p.1.J.2.v. in deep, p.3.J.14. v. which made. p.7.J. 34. for in v.of.J.17. v.it might. p.11.J.5. for is v.of. p.12.J.19. v. Prov.16.1,ult. v. Deut. 7.

XUM